

love letter [noun] : a letter expressing affection

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love letter [noun] : a letter expressing affection

by [luthqrs](#)

Summary

Years before she meets Sara, Ava starts finding anonymous love notes scattered across her life, each claiming to be from a different year; ranging from centuries before she was born to the present day.

Notes

nobody beta'd this and i've read and reread it so many times that the words don't mean anything anymore so,,, we die like sara lance.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Ava found the first note in her office, at the end of a day so long that she barely remembered its beginning. Her brain had stopped cataloguing her actions somewhere between her fourth and fifth coffee, leaving Ava with the distinct feeling that time was bustling by without her, stranded in the peculiar fog of existing without feeling time passing. She couldn't tell you what she'd been doing all day, only that she'd been doing something, and that she most certainly had not finished doing it.

Ava's chair groaned in resistance as she rolled back on it, creating space to open the drawer under her desk. Still gazing in the general direction of her laptop, her fingers reached for the little gold spoon she kept in her drawer for the express purpose of stirring her afternoon coffee, craving the soothing feeling of the paisley engravings on her fingertips. Curling her fingers around cold metal, she grazed across an unfamiliar texture in her drawer. Ava's desk drawer was immaculately organised, so much so that she needn't look when reaching into it, for she knew without a doubt that each item would be in the same place each time. So when her tired mind logged the dry texture of thick letter-paper, instead of the velveteen cloth the spoon usually sat on, she was subject to be surprised.

The fog in her mind evaporated to a thin mist as she twirled the teaspoon mindlessly between her fingers, running the pad of her thumb up and down its ridged stem. Looking down at her drawer curiously, she noticed the offending texture; a little blank rectangle of paper; paper of a far higher calibre than the Time Bureau would ever splurge on (and Ava would know, she had filed more than one strongly-worded complaint about the pathetic paper quality in the office). She reached out and traced its length carefully, before picking it up to inspect it. Turning it over, careful not to crease the delicate fibre, she realised it wasn't blank at all. On the side which had been facing down, three words were printed in a delicate Spencerian script, clearly having been laboured over for quite some time, alongside a number detailed in the top corner by the same hand.

"I love you. 1837"

Ava's nose crinkled in confusion, turning the card gently in her palm to see if there was more detail that she was missing. Much to her confusion, the slip was otherwise completely blank.

She was roused by a knock on the wall of her cubicle, snapping her back to reality and the job she was being paid to do in this office in

the first place.

“What do you want?” She asked, as she dropped the note back into her drawer and forced it shut, her tone a little more curt than perhaps was called for. Her professional mask slipped back on easily and the little card was forgotten about in favour of whatever issue was being brought to her desk, by the poor fool (*‘see also: idiot’*, she mused grumpily) who had decided that they required Ava’s input at 4 pm on a Friday.

Ava found the second note a couple of days after having forgotten about the first. Returning home from her morning run, she slammed her entire body against her front door, leaning on it as the heavy oak groaned open. She wondered, not for the first time, what on God’s green Earth it was that possessed whoever built this complex to use the world’s densest wood on her door, when the rest of the apartment was built with all of the sturdiness and intended longevity of a dollhouse. Perhaps they got excited and blew their entire budget on the front door, having to settle for second best everywhere else, she mused. Not a worthy sacrifice, in Ava’s opinion.

Having pressed the door shut behind her, she set her sights on the fridge, longing for a glass of cold water to relieve the burning in her lungs, when she noticed something tacked to the fridge door. Ava’s fridge was usually completely devoid of personal mementoes, the sleek silver surface clean of magnets, photos, grocery lists or any other common knick-knacks that people regularly decorated the surface with. Her fridge was a blank canvas. She had never had the urge to decorate it, perhaps because she’d never come into possession of any personal items like photographs, that she might consider putting on display. Even if she had, she was certain that there were more suitable places to do so throughout her apartment, such as a tasteful singular photo frame on the shelf in her living room.

And so, with Ava’s fridge usually bearing no visual interest at all, the paper slip pressed to the door stood out quite garishly. She reached out and gently pulled it out from underneath the little round magnet that had been pinning it down, muscle memory reminding her of the first time she’d found a curious slip of paper. This note, however, was slightly different. While the first had been blank on one side, every inch of this slip was covered in faded text, neat letters printed in

uniform lines slipping off the edge of the page, unable to finish conveying their message. A newspaper clipping, Ava noted.

A serif typeface blared a headline that Ava barely read (something about the collapse of the Berlin Wall), in a charcoal grey that she imagined having once been black, followed by a string of printed sentences, faded and marked over time, making it mostly illegible. Remarkably, the aggressive headline was not the main visual interest on the clipping. Ava found her eyes drawn to the centre of the slip, where three words stood out, handwritten in jet black ink over the time-worn, uniform typeface. The writer had made a valiant attempt at mimicking the font printed on the newspaper, Ava thought, her brow furrowing in an odd sense of charm; she would admit to being impressed at the penmanship.

“I LOVE YOU”

And beneath it, four faded numbers had been circled in the same black ink.

“1989”

The circle was messy, a blotch sitting along its line as though an old-fashioned fountain pen had been pressed to the page for a second too long.

Standing haplessly by her fridge, the door still open, the light inside having flickered off from the period of disuse, Ava was entirely consumed by the fragile little newspaper clipping in her hand. Logically, she knew that she should be concerned. While she couldn't be truly sure that the first letter had certainly originated in 1837 as it claimed, it was hard to believe that this second note was anything but a genuine article. In that case, at least one, if not both of the notes she'd received, were anachronistic and considering that her very job description was preventing and correcting such anomalies, she should have, at the very least, reported them.

And yet somewhere in her mind, was a small voice keeping her from doing just that. Perhaps, being isolated and attached to her job as she was, there was something about the little slips of paper that made her feel a little less alone.

And then, of course, there was the blatant matter of the message on each note. *“I love you.”* If Ava knew one thing to be true, it was that she certainly did not have anybody in her life that would feel inclined to tell her that they loved her, let alone painstakingly scribe it onto

notes for her to find. She considered for a moment that it could be somebody playing a practical joke, but reconsidered when she failed to think even of a person who disliked her intensely enough to do so. Ava didn't have friends, didn't have enemies, just acquaintances. People whose names she knew and vice versa. That was the extent of her human relationships, just how she liked it. She was good at being alone and she'd convinced herself that she was better off that way.

A loud beeping from her fridge, expressing its frustration at having been neglected as it had, disrupted her train of thought. Shaken, she glanced at the clock, and all thoughts of the notes vanished from her mind, as she came to the realisation that she was fifteen minutes away from being very late for work. And so the newspaper clipping lay discarded on her kitchen bench, sitting all alone, the only out of place item in her apartment.

Ava moved the note from her kitchen counter to her fridge door that night when she returned from work, securing it with the same magnet that she'd found it with. The next morning, and every morning after that Ava would drowsily wander to the kitchen to prepare her morning coffee, and stare at the note on the fridge as it brewed. She would read it over and over again as she sipped at her drink, and stare at it even longer as she brewed her second cup to take with her to work.

It was only a few days until the next note appeared, though if you'd asked Ava, she would have sworn it felt like months. Ava was woken up suddenly in the early hours of the morning by a sharp pain shooting up into her shoulder. Wincing, she bolted upright, massaging feeling back into her arm with a dramatic groan. This was the third night in a row she'd fallen asleep sitting upright against her headboard. She'd been trying to read a true-crime thriller that some guy at the office had suggested to her, but it had been a long day, a week of long days, actually. She'd made it no further than a page and a half at best each night, before promptly passing out, the book falling open on her lap.

Ava patted her lap, then furrowed her brows and swept her hand across the surrounding area on her bed when she didn't feel the book sitting where she'd expected. Assuming she'd knocked it to the floor in her sleep, she moved to check under the bed, when she caught sight of

the title sitting neatly on her bedside table, exactly where she placed it each morning, only she was certain she hadn't put it there herself.

Her mild concern turned to excitement as she noticed a little piece of paper poking out from between the pages. Her heart rate increased by a few paces as she reached to pick up the book, opening it to the page where the scrap of paper was tucked. This note was smaller than the last two, and in a far less cared for condition. The paper was crumpled and its edges were torn, in contrast to the sharp cuttings of its predecessors. It was blue-lined, as though it had been torn from an exercise book or journal, and running her finger over it, Ava could feel faint impressions of letters from writings on the pages that would have been atop it. In soft, rounded handwriting in the middle of the scrap, three words were written using a hot pink, glitter gel pen.

“forever and always”

As per the usual format, the message was followed by an indication of when the note was supposedly written.

“summer ‘03”

The ‘r’ in summer was slightly smudged, as though the writer was too eager to finish the message to wait until the pen had dried. Ava grinned as she imagined the writer’s hand, likely smudged with pink ink and absolutely covered in glitter. She knew from her own high school days that once you had been contaminated with glitter from a gel pen, it somehow spread anywhere and everywhere, regardless of how little you originally came into contact with.

Ava smiled down at the little paper in her hand. She felt a particular attachment to this one; something about it had character. She felt as though she could see a little bit more about whoever had written it, despite the fact that really, she knew nothing more at all. It was something in the glittery pen and the impressions of other messages pressed into the scrap haphazardly, something in the way it felt a little more personal. Perhaps it was just that it was written in a century which she had actually lived through, that she could relate to the element of nostalgia that it emanated, but she felt it was something else. This note felt more personal.

The blinking of Ava’s alarm clock on her nightstand broke her from her reverie, reminding her that it was, in fact, a work day, and that she couldn’t sit on her bed all day, staring at a scrap of paper. She tucked it back into the book, resolving to use it as a bookmark for the

foreseeable future. As she went about her morning routine, the distance between her and the note growing with each second, she began to feel just a little bit ridiculous. She found herself laughing at herself for taking this all so seriously, chuckling breathily as she fastened her bureau pin to her lapel.

She was a government official, well on her way to becoming director, who was hung up on an anonymous stranger leaving her odd little love letters. At the bare minimum, she should find it all a little eerie, hell, she definitely should have reported this to somebody at some point, she thought, not for the first time. But somewhere deep in her chest sat a feeling she couldn't shake; that it wasn't stupid at all, that against all odds, this all really meant something. It meant something to Ava, at least. And she decided that by some personal miracle, she was okay with that feeling, allowing her emotions to hold a candle to her logical mind just a little longer.

She couldn't help but feel a little more loved. It was as though, even though Ava hadn't the faintest idea who it was, she could pretend that somebody cared about her, even just a little bit. She didn't have anyone in her life who loved her, but it was nice to have a flimsy, but not-completely baseless reason to pretend that that wasn't the case.

The next note waited only a day after its predecessor before arriving at her doorstep, travelling by means of the apartment complex's nomadic cat; Merlin. A scratch at the door encouraged Ava to haul herself unceremoniously off the sofa and pull the door open, tightening her dressing gown around her waist.

"Hey little dude," she cooed gently, scratching the creature under his neck. She relished in the sensory input that his soft fur on her fingertips provided, a familiar comfort sweeping over her, only to be disturbed by an acute pain shooting up from her finger, causing her to gasp sharply and snatch her hand away. She watched a cool droplet of blood slide down her finger, before pressing her finger between her lips and running her tongue over the wound to relieve the stinging.

In all the excitement, Merlin had scampered back into the corridor, hovering outside the thick wooden door cautiously, uncertain whether he was welcome any longer. Ava reached down and scooped him up into her arms, holding the matted mess of orange fur against her

chest.

“What have you got there, huh Merlin?” She asked conspiratorially, her eyes narrowing playfully as though she were expecting him to answer.

Reaching more slowly to his neck, so she didn't cut herself once more, Ava closed her fingers delicately around what else but a slip of paper, attached to Merlin's bell collar with a little piece of brown string. Glancing back at her finger, she laughed humorlessly. A *paper cut*, she should have known.

Deftly releasing the paper from Merlin's collar, she let the cat back down to the floor. He promptly scooted off into the hallway, a little delivery creature who had done his due diligence and safely transported his precious cargo.

A pinkish hue found its place on Ava's cheeks, alongside a quiet smile. Somehow, in some way, she was coming to enjoy the little notes that were mysteriously making their way to her. She ran her finger delicately over the one currently in her hand. The paper was dense, aged like the first one, but in an artistic, well-preserved manner. Its beige colouring naturally darkened a little at the edges, stained by specks of dust that had come to rest upon its surface over the years. Also akin to the first note she had received, it was mostly blank, aside from a small string of beautifully calligraphed words dancing across the top of the card.

« *Je t'aimerais toujours.* »

And as always, beneath the message; a year, this time accompanied by a little wax stained red heart.

« 1791 »

“*Je t'aimerais toujours.*” Ava breathed. ‘*I will always love you.*’ Her heart tightened, the words blocking her bloodstream and slowing the tempo of her heart until she felt it might simply cease to beat. In the peculiar way that languages foreign to one's own tongue often do, the words felt as though they carried more meaning this way, they felt more beautiful, more genuine. Ava was surprised by the desperate sense of longing that washed hotly over her body as she traced the words on the card with her wounded finger. Deep inside her stomach, she felt a pull towards the nameless author of the messages, yet on the surface, she felt nothing but a furious sense of shame, embarrassment at an attachment to something that was nothing but a (secretly

welcome) curiosity in her quiet life.

Over the following weeks, the tradition continued. Ava continued secretly hoping that each note wasn't the last, and continued finding them, despite never truly searching. Each one was different from the one before it, but each one bore the same sentiment. A snippet of *Pride of Prejudice*, with "I love you, most ardently." embossed in shimmering gold leaf, dated 1813. A page from an old cheque book, with "More than money." scrawled in the amount owed, dated 1922. An admit-one ticket for a drive-in screening of 1959's *'Some Like It Hot'*, absolutely covered in hand drawn hearts in red ink. A folded baroque period music sheet with a loopy line in golden ink sweeping across the page like a piece of string, winding through the music notes, dated 1695. Ava kept each note in a little box in her bedside drawer, aside from the 1989 news clipping attached to her fridge door and the 2003 glitter gel-penned confession tucked into her novel as a bookmark.

They continued to appear across various locations in Ava's life once a week, if not more frequently, until they didn't.

In the weeks which followed the final note, Ava found herself uncharacteristically unable to focus on her work. Almost miraculously, the work she was paid to do became just that, a means to an end. A dismal cloud of false hope cast over her thoughts, allowing her only moments of distraction in the perfect fabrication she called life. Each time she reached for a new pen from her drawer, she hoped to swipe her fingertips along the smooth fibre of an unexpected slip of paper. When she let her gaze sweep the room as she lifted her eyes from her computer, she hoped to see a white slip pinned to her wall or lodged between two books on her shelf. When she plunged her hand into her dresser, she sadistically hoped that her hand would return to her dripping with blood from a paper cut. And yet despite Ava's hoping, her desperate longing, she was alone once more. She took the newspaper clipping off the fridge, and the notebook scrap from between the pages of her book, and packed them away with the others in her nightstand.

Winter passed in a quiet frost, and Ava no longer thought about the box of notes in her bedside dresser. For all intents and purposes, her life returned to how it was before, and though she was left with an

awkward longing for something she'd never truly had; she didn't feel quite so lonely as she had before the very first note had arrived in her life. By the time she was promoted to second-in-command at the bureau, she would have forgotten about the collection of letters entirely, though the feeling of being quietly loved by somebody in the distance never fully subsided.

And miraculously, that's when *She* came along.

Sara, *fucking* , Lance. Sara Lance, who essentially embodied a tornado. Sara Lance, who Ava thought to be a completely unpredictable, chaotic, stubborn, infuriating, royal pain in the ass. Sara Lance, who Ava Sharpe fell irrevocably, deeply, madly in love with. Sara Lance, who made her feel safe and warm and cared for. Sara Lance, who brought her dinner when she worked late and stayed awake until she came home. Sara Lance, who introduced Ava to her family, and told her that from then on, they were Ava's family too. Sara Lance, who loved her back, and told her every single day.

Sara Lance, who was currently in Ava's apartment, rummaging through her things, calling it "exploring". Ava rolled her eyes fondly, lifting her eyes from her book to watch her girlfriend lazily picking things up and inspecting them so softly that you might think she was worried they would break under her gaze. She wandered over to Ava and started investigating the things on her nightstand, and Ava returned contently to her book.

"You kept them." Sara breathed suddenly, bewilderment seeping through each syllable.

"Huh?" Ava raised her eyebrows with a silent laugh, closing her book and absent-mindedly tracing the words on the cover.

"The notes," Sara said softly.

"What notes, baby?"

Sara turned to face Ava, scooting closer and placing the little black box she'd found in Ava's nightstand on the bed between them.

Ava curled her fingers around the box, tracing the smooth surface of its lid, a soft smile gracing her lips as she remembered each letter, one

by one. A year had passed since she'd opened that nightstand drawer. Maybe two. Ava hadn't thought about the letters at all, not now that she had Sara.

"You kept them all. Every single one."

Pink rose to Ava's cheeks, the embarrassment of having never discarded the letters reaching her face. Embarrassment was gradually overtaken with concern as she gazed at Sara, who was beginning to tear up. She sat up cross-legged, a mirror image of the girl before her, placing her hands atop Sara's on the box.

"Wait, Sara, baby, how did you know about these? I never told anyone about them, I haven't even looked at them in years."

Sara took a deep breath, looked down into her lap and started speaking in a soft tone, words spilling out of her as though coming from a place where she'd compartmentalised them, waiting to release them in this moment.

"A little while after we'd started dating, you mentioned that you'd spent nearly all of your time alone before you met me, so I made a promise to myself that I would personally see to it that from that moment onward, you were never lonely for even one second. I couldn't bear the thought of you feeling alone. I couldn't believe that you had gone for years thinking that nobody loved you, that nobody ever would, because I couldn't possibly be the only person who loved you so much that it hurt.

That was the day I realised I was in love with you. Deeply, intensely, never-love-another-person-but-you, in love with you." Sara looked up through her eyelashes, a soft smile gracing her face, love seeping out of every crease.

"And I needed you to know that you were going to be loved every second of every day for the rest of your life, so I told you. Just, not present-you.

On each mission from that day forward, I found something to write on; a slip of paper from Marie Antoinette's drawing desk, a drive-in cinema ticket to a Marilyn Monroe film, a newspaper clipping from the day after the Berlin wall fell, a page out of my highschool diary. On it, I told you I loved you, then I returned home, flung myself into present-you's arms and wished I had the courage to tell her too.

It became a ritual, a way to cope. I always wished I could've been

there when you found them, to see if you read them, to see if the loneliness in your eyes subsided, even just for a second.”

She bit her lip, sitting cross-legged in front of Ava, her cheeks pink, her fingers frantically twisting and braiding the tassels on the cushion in her lap, worried that for whatever reason, Ava wouldn't be okay with her little secret.

“Sara.” Ava breathed admiringly, reaching out to cup her girlfriend's face, gently tracing her cheekbones with the pads of her thumbs. She could feel the love in her body pouring out through her touch, radiating from every inch of her skin, her whole body glowing with warm admiration for this girl who had chosen to love her before Ava had even met her. They sat in silence, foreheads pressed together, Ava tracing patterns on Sara's cheeks while she let her tears fall down her face.

“Why did you stop?” Ava breathed. It sounded childish and petulant even to her own ears, but if Sara took it that way, she didn't show it.

“Well,” Sara leaned back and wiped her tears, a beam overtaking her features. She looked up at Ava through her eyelashes. “Two reasons, I suppose. One, I couldn't keep sending you love letters so close to when we were actually due to meet, because you know as well as I do,” Ava interrupted by narrowing her eyes in a playful challenge. Sara giggled wetly and corrected herself, “Okay, maybe *better* than I do, that doing so could totally have messed things up.” Her eyes filled with mirth and her voice softened once more.

“But also, I didn't need to keep secretly penning confessions of my love for you on little notes and sending them into the past, because I could say it aloud, in the present. The day I stopped writing past-you love notes was the day I told present-you that I was in love with you. I didn't need the notes anymore, and in a couple of months' time, if the timeline played out as it should, you wouldn't either.”

Ava sank her teeth into her bottom lip and closed her eyes to suppress the uncontrollable smile rising to her cheeks. Opening her eyes quickly, she leaned forward and grabbed Sara's face, crashing their lips together and praying that the love and adoration coursing through her body would seep from her mouth to Sara's.

“Thank you.” Ava breathed into the kiss, knowing that those two simple words could never truly express how grateful she was for the girl in front of her.

Pulling away gently, she beamed, tears in her eyes. “I think I must be the luckiest girl in the world to be loved by you.”

Ava never did find the right words to tell Sara how much the notes had meant to her, but somehow she knew that Sara understood. Sara had always understood.

End Notes

this actually started as a drabble in french, then i got carried away and had to switch to english because the fic surpassed my grasp on the french language so we got this instead

“i must be the luckiest girl in the world to be loved by you” is based on a line from one of my fav fics called 'les affres de la jalousie" by fridayqueen! (the line itself sounds so much prettier in french, totally worth a read!)

the golden string across the music page is a reference to 'invisible string' by taylor swift,,, i'm not sure it was completely obvious, but it's there.

<3 ava sharpe <3

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